

# Harvard Business Review

## The Evolution of the CMO

By **Caren Fleit**

As marketing channels and tools grew over the decades, so did the status and responsibilities of top marketing executives.

Partners in Perfection

**IBM**

### Electric Typewriters

Touch the keys of an IBM Electric Typewriter and you'll realize instantly that here is a real partner in turning out beautiful work. An IBM is so easy to operate. Finger and arm travel are reduced to a minimum. You save time . . . and energy.

Give this partnership the advantages of specially designed IBM Ribbons and Carbon Paper and you have the perfect combination for quality typing production.

You and your company, too, deserve the benefits of all these partners in perfection.

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS MACHINES

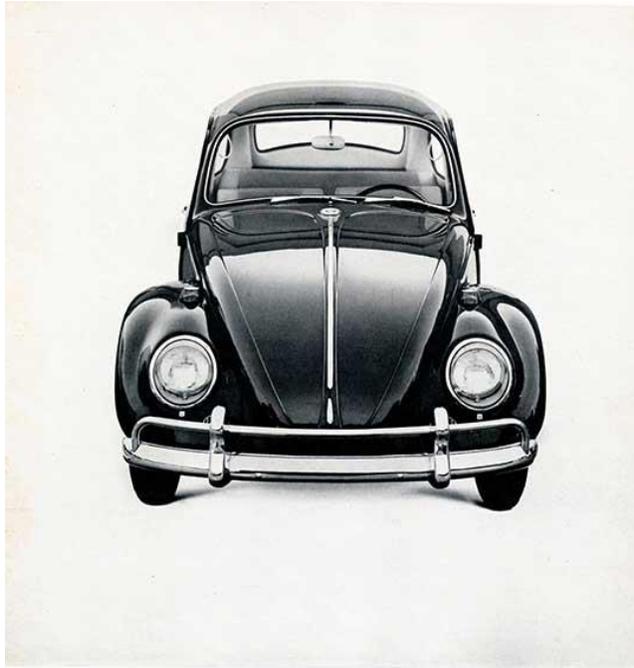
- IBM, Dept. A-2
- 390 Madison Ave., New York 22, N. Y.
- In Canada: Don Mills Road, Toronto 6, Ont.
- I'd like to see a demonstration of the IBM Electric Typewriter.
- Please send brochure.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Company: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

## 1950s

Marketing focuses largely on creating TV and print advertising to sell products to consumers. Top-level marketing executives are found almost exclusively in the consumer goods and automotive industries.

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## Ugly is only skin-deep.

It may not be much to look at. But beneath that humble exterior beats an air-cooled engine. It won't boil over and ruin your piston rings. It won't freeze over and ruin your life. It's in the back of the car for better traction in snow and sand. And it will give you about 29 miles to a gallon of gas.

After a while you get to like so much

about the VW, you even get to like what it looks like.

You find that there's enough legroom for almost anybody's legs. Enough headroom for almost anybody's head. With a hat on it. Snug-fitting bucket seats. Doors that close so well you can hardly close them. (They're so airtight, it's better to open the window a crack first.)



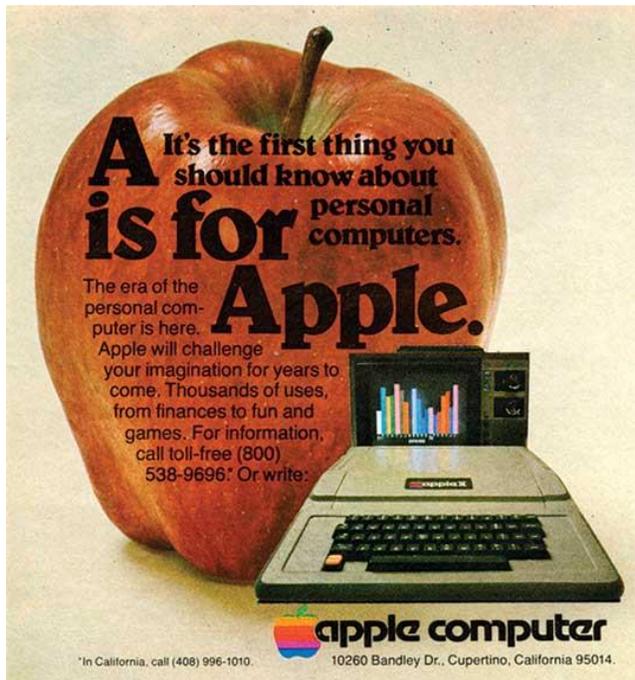
Those plain, unglamorous wheels are each suspended independently. So when a bump makes one wheel bounce, the bounce doesn't make the other wheel bump. It's things like that you pay the \$1385\* for, when you buy a VW. The ugliness doesn't add a thing to the cost of the car. That's the beauty of it.

©Volkswagen of America, Inc. \*Suggested Retail Price, East Coast P.O.E. (S1663 West Coast P.O.E.), Local Taxes and Other Dealer Delivery Charges, if Any, Additional.

## 1960s

Advertising is still limited mainly to paid TV and print channels but moves away from exaggerated claims and aggressively pushing products and toward inventing creative and memorable approaches. The ad campaign is king.

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The era of the personal computer is here. **Apple.**

Apple will challenge your imagination for years to come. Thousands of uses, from finances to fun and games. For information, call toll-free (800) 538-9696.\* Or write:

 **apple computer**

\*In California, call (408) 996-1010. 10260 Bandley Dr., Cupertino, California 95014.

## 1970s

Marketing adopts analytics and begins generating insights about customer choices and segmenting customers. Particularly in consumer goods, marketers become increasingly responsible for product management, pricing, promotion, and distribution.

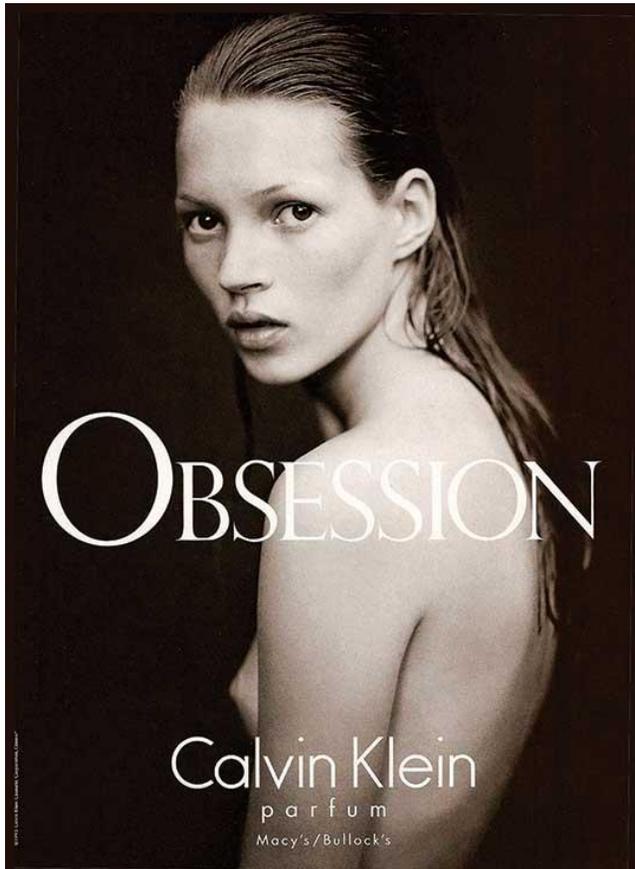
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## 1980s

Cable TV, infomercials, and VCRs (which allow viewers to skip ads) make marketing's job more complex and ratchet up the pressure for advertising efficiency. Analytics become critical to precisely tracking performance in each sales channel. Consumer-goods marketers start to assume P&L responsibility and enterprise-wide roles. Other industries, like consumer finance, begin hiring top-level marketing executives, though those jobs focus more on branding and corporate communications.

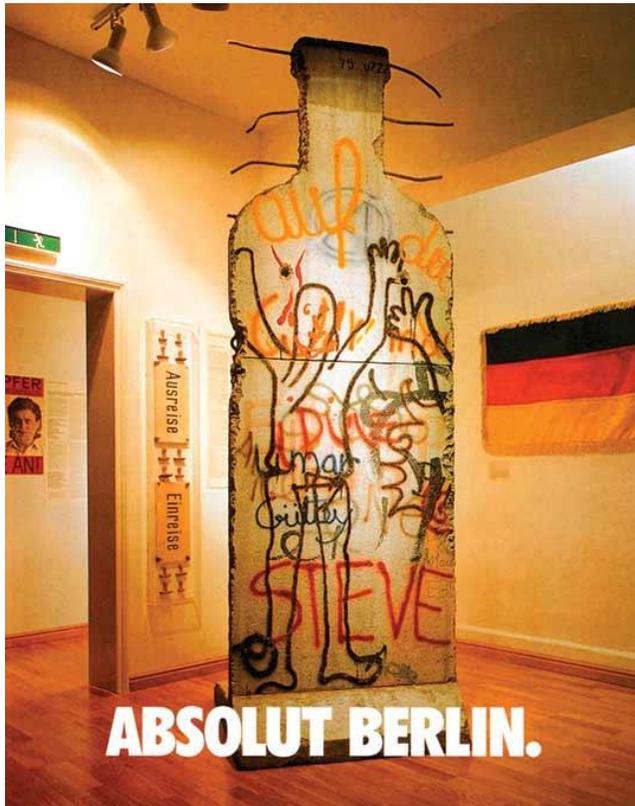
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## 1990s

A broader marketing function emerges in industries such as health care and technology, and B2B marketers appear. The role of the marketing leader becomes blurry, as companies struggle to find a balance between more-strategic responsibilities (brand positioning, segmentation, and business growth) and more-tactical ones (sales enablement, creating brochures, and manning trade shows). Marketing departments begin to set up matrix structures combining corporate functions with regional and business unit functions. Customer relationship management takes hold. The CMO title is first used.

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## 2000s

The digital revolution changes the way companies and customers relate. As social media platforms take off, people rely more on one another for information about products. Marketers must manage omnichannel communications and both negative and positive messages about their brands. They begin focusing on building meaningful relationships with customers. The CMO title spreads but is used indiscriminately both for executives strictly focused on brand and communications and for true strategic business partners.

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## 2010s

Big data and artificial intelligence swamp marketers with information. The focus shifts from telling and selling to customer engagement and dialogues and personalized communications and products. CMOs are expected to creatively apply insights to business challenges, validate decisions with data, create seamless customer experiences across media and revenue channels, and lead efforts to put the customer at the center throughout the organization. Most CMOs now sit on executive committees and report directly to the CEO. But there is confusion about the role, leading some to question the title and explore alternatives like chief customer officer, chief customer experience officer, and chief growth officer.

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